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ABSTRACT

The effects of career-related factors and ethnic background on career resilience were examined in a study of 467 graduate and undergraduate students (68 African American, 42 Hispanic, and 357 Anglo American). The students ranged in age from 17 through 56 years and were predominately from middle- to upper-middle-class homes. The 102-item Career Influence and Resilience Inventory was used to examine the students' career resilience and the effect of parent, teacher, and peer attitudes/supportiveness on the students' career resilience. The Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure was used to gather data on the students' ethnic identity, orientation to others, and identification with "American" ideals. No differences were found between the mean scores for the three ethnic groups on career resilience or for any of the career influence factors examined. However, the correlations for ethnic identity differed considerably across the groups. For African Americans, high levels of career resilience were associated with having a strong sense of one's cultural roots and ethnic pride. For Anglo Americans, orientation to other groups and strong identification with the ideals of the majority culture were associated with high levels of career resilience. The regression model was not significant for Hispanic students. (Contains 56 references.) (MN)

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The Impact of Career and Ethnic Influences on Career Resilience

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There have been numerous studies devoted to the pathological symptoms of youth who are at risk of failing socially, emotionally, academically, and professionally (Barbarin, 1993; Dryfoos, 1990). Whereas it is imperative to understand the causes and symptoms of at-risk behavior (i.e., attitudes and behaviors that jeopardize appropriate development in these areas), it is just as urgent to comprehend the profiles of resilient youth. Resilience is defined as having the resources to overcome adverse conditions without impairment (e.g. psychological maladjustment, behavioral problems) (Henderson & Milstein, 1996; Rak & Patterson, 1996; Werner & Smith, 1992). The research on resilience has enabled those who work with at-risk youth to take a more preventative versus reactive approach to help them overcome stressful events.

Various conceptualizations and assessments of resilience exist that include internal (e.g., attitudes, values, cognitive processes) and external (e.g., relationships, support from significant others) resources and outcomes (e.g., behaviors, performance outcomes) (Henderson & Milstein, 1996; Rak & Patterson, 1996; Werner & Smith, 1992). The literature often refers to these internal and external resources as protective factors, variables that enhance the probability of a positive outcome in the face of adversity (Masten, 1994; Rutter, 1987; Werner, 1990). The current study conceptualizes resilience as including only internal resources (i.e., particular beliefs and perceptions that impact development positively); protective factors are conceptualized as both internal (e.g., self-efficacy, ethnic identity) and external (e.g., parent, teacher, and friend influences) resources that impact resilience.

One aspect of resilience, career resilience, is the successful pursuit of career goals in spite of adverse and/or stressful events. The purpose of this study was to explore specific influences (e.g., career and ethnic factors) on the career resilience of college students from various ethnic

backgrounds. Although career and ethnic influences may serve as protective factors that enhance one's potential to be resilient, to date they have received little attention in the research. The majority of studies focusing on protective factors reveal strong support for factors in the personal, family, and environmental domains. Although most of these protective factors are similar across ethnic groups, there are some differences. Following is a brief summary of major protective factor studies.

Protective Factors

Personal characteristics and behaviors. Longitudinal studies (Garmezy, Masten, & Tellegen, 1984; Rutter, 1986; Werner & Smith, 1982) have identified the following personal characteristics and behaviors for resilient adolescents, those who are minimally affected by risk factors included poverty and family discord: (a) positive temperament; (b) proactive and optimistic outlook on life; (c) meaningful purpose and goals; (d) autonomy (i.e., belief that you have the opportunity to make independent choices); and (e) coping strategies (e.g., creative problem solving skills). While conducting research with children, Bernard (1991) observed significant differences in achievement behavior between resilient children and those who became vulnerable to risk factors. Resilient children demonstrated a higher level of critical thinking skills, goal directedness, and motivation. Using findings from the National Education Longitudinal Study (NELS) database (U.S. Department of Education, 1988), Peng, Lee, Wang, and Walberg (1992) investigated the personal characteristics of resilience among high academic achievers from low socioeconomic households. Their findings revealed that these students had higher levels of self-esteem, educational aspirations, and internal locus of control than nonresilient students.

Certain coping strategies employed during stressful events also can serve as personal protective factors. Chess (1989) revealed that "adaptive distancing" is a successful psychological coping mechanism used by resilient students. Adaptive distancing occurs when individuals psychologically and emotionally remove themselves from distressed significant others in order to achieve their own planned goals. This finding was supported by Sparks (1996) who explored the manner in which African American adolescents successfully cope with assaultive violence in their neighborhoods. In addition to distancing, the following strategies were beneficial in handling the stress of violence: (a) confrontation; (b) self-control (regulating feelings and actions while in a violent encounter); and (c) planful problem-solving (e.g., creating strategic procedures with alternatives).

Although cross-cultural comparisons of protective strategies are rare, the limited data suggest that there are ethnic group differences in personal characteristics and behaviors. For example, studies with adequate representations of Hispanic, African, and Anglo Americans have revealed that resilient ethnic minorities are bicultural: they have learned how to operate successfully in more than one culture (Clark, 1991; Howard, 1996; Winfield, 1991). Biculturalism is often reinforced by parents at a very young age, along with styles of behavior (e.g. speech, physical posture), to prevent stressful events (Taylor, 1994). This is especially true for African American male adolescents, who are often viewed with fear or suspicion. Parents attempt to help them engage in behaviors that will help deter such stereotypical thinking. It also has been suggested that African Americans and Hispanics utilize religious beliefs as protective factors more than their Anglo American counterparts (Peterson, 1997).

Family relationships. Individuals under stress often find that positive outcomes can be enhanced by support from family networks. Observations of resilient children have revealed that

some of the major family characteristics deemed helpful include: values that encourage education, close bonds, explicit and reinforced boundaries, and a style of interaction that uses high warmth/low criticism and supportive relationships with caring others (Bernard, 1991; Forman & Kalafat, 1998; Henderson & Milstein, 1996; Howard, 1996). It was found that extended family members (e.g. grandparents, aunts), as well as neighbors, often were available to serve in this caretaking role. Results from longitudinal studies indicate that the following family structures appear to promote resiliency: four or fewer children, spaced at least two years apart; intense nurturing by the primary caretaker during the first year of life; and multi-age family networks that share similar beliefs and are available to counsel the children (Rak & Patterson, 1996; Werner & Smith, 1982). Additional family experiences have been identified for resilient African American youth, such as the major role played by religion, strong encouragement of educational and career goals, and the development of a positive racial/ethnic identity (Howard, 1996; McAdoo, 1995; Taylor, 1994).

Recently, family scholars have identified the need to study the complex contribution of culture (Native American, Native Hawaiian, Asian American, African American, Hispanic/Latino and other culture traditions) as a supportive factor for resilience. Culture and ethnicity are viewed as having a key impact on how families adapt to stress, especially on their strategies for appraisal, utilization of resources, and problem solving (Cross, 1995; McCubbin, Futrell, Thompson, & Thompson, 1998; McCubbin, McCubbin, Thompson, & Thompson, 1995). Understanding the manner in which these factors interrelate during adversity can assist in identifying additional family protective factors that enhance resilience.

Environmental support. Many family protective factors are strengthened by the social support found in communities, churches, schools, and peer groups. These structures promote

resiliency by providing role models/mentors (Beardslee & Podorefsky, 1988; Garmezy et al., 1984; Werner, 1984), opportunities for leadership and effective decision making, guidelines for prosocial development of values (e.g., altruism) and life skills (e.g. cooperation, responsibility), and an appreciation of individual talents (Henderson & Milstein, 1996; Richardson, Neiger, Jensen, & Kumpfer, 1990; Werner & Smith, 1982). Community support is particularly beneficial for resilient behavior among racial/ethnic groups (Barrera, Li, & Chassin, 1995; Genero, 1998; Howard, 1996; Nettles & Pleck, 1993). Prelow and Guarnaccia's (1997) study revealed that African American and Hispanic students were more likely to rely on social support from schools and neighborhoods than were Anglo American students.

There is general agreement among social scientists that protective factors that result in resilient behavior can be observed in a variety of contexts (e.g., home, school, and community settings). Although they frequently are referred to as if they are separate domains, these protective factors are interrelated and constantly influence one another.

Career Resilience

Due to the complexity of resilience as a construct, it may be helpful to focus on specific types or components of the construct. The major purpose of this study was to explore career resilience, that aspect of resilience that enables at-risk individuals to maintain their career focus/goals in spite of adversities and/or stressful events. Very little research exists in this area. Studies which focus on the manner in which at-risk youth overcome and learn from adversity can be instrumental in the development of interventions designed for career decision-making.

In this study, the concept of career resilience was operationalized as a set of personal attitudes that contributes to one's successful career path in spite of adversity (e.g., poverty, high crime neighborhoods). These attitudes were observed in a qualitative study that explored career

influences on the career decision making of African American and Hispanic undergraduates (Fisher & Griggs, 1995). The collective attitudes were conceptualized as career resilience because of the students' experiences in overcoming obstacles. In order to obtain a better understanding of career resilience, the present study investigated its relationship to two viable protective factors: career influences and ethnic influences.

Career influences. Career influences refers to the perceived encouragement individuals receive for their career goals from parents, teachers, and peers. This is a form of social support that can specifically address the nature of career resilience. Additionally, support for one's career goals is a personal resource that has strong relationships to self-esteem (Blustein & Noumair, 1996). There has been considerable research demonstrating the important role of self-esteem and self-concept on resilience (Bolig & Weddle, 1988; Rutter, 1986; Werner, 1986). Therefore, assessing the support one has for career goals may be helpful in comprehending factors that enhance resiliency among our youth.

Ethnic influences. Researchers recently have begun to explore the association between ethnic identity and resilience (McCubbin et al., 1998). Ethnic identity is conceptualized broadly to include a sense of membership in one's racial/ethnic group, a personal understanding of the implications of belonging to this group, pride in one's group, knowledge of the group's history and traditions, and participation in the group's cultural activities (Phinney, DuPont, Espinosa, Revill, & Sanders, 1994). Interest in the relationship between resilience and ethnic identity has evolved from studies that have focused on the impact of cultural values, family traditions, and strength of ethnic identity. In a study of Asian American college students, results indicated a strong relationship between positive Asian ethnic identity and academic achievement (Ngo & Malz, 1995). Zimmerman, Ramirez, Washienko, Walter, and Dyer (1995) reported similar

findings for Native Americans college students: a high level of ethnic identity and involvement in cultural activities enhanced self-esteem, as well as problem solving skills. These results confirm data that have been presented in previous studies on ethnic identity. The major conclusions about ethnic identity include the following: it is a key developmental issue for adolescents from racial/ethnic groups (Phinney & Alipuria, 1990); one's ethnic identity seems to contribute to a healthy mental state (Anderson, 1991); and a positive ethnic identity is related to high self-esteem, especially among minority youth (Phinney, 1989, 1992). Additionally, one's racial/ethnic identity appears to have implications for career development: the stronger the ethnic identity the less restricted one's career choices (Bowman, 1993; Hines, 1997; Murry & Mosidi, 1993). Thus, the relationship between ethnic identity and several developmental markers has created support for acknowledging ethnic identity as a protective factor.

Although ethnic identity typically is conceptualized as stated above, one's acceptance of American ideals and values also can be considered as part of one's ethnic identity. American ideals reflect key characteristics that people believe about America (e.g. a land of economic opportunity). A strong ethnic identity and high identification with American ideals are related to strong feelings of self-esteem, especially if being an American is highly valued (Phinney et al., 1994). In this study, the authors build upon previous ethnic identity research by assessing both the level of identification with one's ethnic group and with mainstream American ideals/culture. The present study addresses three research questions to explore the impact of ethnic and career influences on career resilience:

1. Are there mean differences in scores on career resilience for the three ethnic groups: African Americans, Anglo Americans, and Hispanics?

2. Are there mean differences in scores on career influences for the three ethnic groups, including the influence of teachers, parents, and friends; academic self-efficacy; high school academic experiences; and career commitment?
3. Are there mean differences in scores on ethnic influences for the three ethnic groups, including ethnic identity; orientation toward other cultural groups; and identification with American ideals?
4. To what extent is career resilience predicted by the influence of teachers, parents, and friends; academic self-efficacy; high school academic experiences; and career commitment for three ethnic groups?
5. To what extent is career resilience predicted by one's ethnic influences (i.e., ethnic identity, orientation toward other cultural groups, and identification with American ideals) for the three ethnic groups?

Method

Participants

Participants for the present study consisted of 467 graduate and undergraduate students from diverse ethnic backgrounds, including 68 African American, 42 Hispanic, and 357 White students. Females (n = 270) participated in greater numbers than males (n = 149), with 48 participants not indicating their gender. Participants ranged in age from 17 through 56 (M=22.2, SD = 6.8). They were predominately from middle to upper middle class homes, including 16 from lower, 49 from lower middle, 183 from middle, 173 from upper middle, and 40 from upper class homes. Six students did not indicate their income level. Most respondents (n = 206) were freshmen; 61 were sophomores; 69 were juniors; 41 were seniors; and 74 were in graduate school; 16 did not indicate their year in college programs.

Instruments

Career Influence and Resilience Inventory (CIRI). The CIRI is a 102-item instrument that is an extension of the Career Influence Inventory (CII; Fisher & Stafford, 1999). The CII is a 35-item measure of career influences in six areas: parent, teacher, and friend influences; ethnic-gender expectations; academic experiences and self-efficacy; and negative social events. For the development of the CIRI, items were taken from the CII and additional items were added. The result was an inventory of 12 subscales, including the following: parent, teacher, and friend influence; academic self-efficacy; high school academic experiences; ethnic expectations; gender expectations; coping; career commitment; negative social events; stress; and career resilience. For the purposes of this study, only the subscales of parent, teacher, and friend influences; academic self-efficacy; high school academic experiences; career commitment; and career resilience (see Appendix A) were used. For all of these scales participants respond to a four-point Likert scale ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree." Scale scores are computed by averaging the scores for each item in the respective scale and thus range from one to four with higher scores reflecting more adaptive outcomes.

Internal consistency estimates were computed for all scales used in the study (see Appendix A). The Cronbach's α reliability indices for scales used in this study range from .78 (resilience) to .90 (teacher influence).

Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure. The Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure (MEIM; Phinney, 1992) also was administered to all participants. The MEIM consists of 20 items, 14 of which assess ethnic identity and six of which assess other-group orientation. Item responses fall along a four-point Likert scale from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree." Total scores are formed by averaging items for each scale; thus, total scores range from one to four. Higher

scores reflect greater ethnic identity and orientation to other groups. Factor analysis has established that these items consistently load on their two respective factors for college samples (Phinney, 1992). Additionally, Phinney reported that reliability coefficients (Cronbach's α) for a college sample were strong for both the ethnic identity scale (.90) and the other-group orientation scale (.74).

Identification with American Ideals. The Identification with American Ideals measure (IAI; Phinney et al., 1994) also was administered to all participants. The IAI is a 12-item measure for which participants are asked to rate items on a four-point Likert scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree according to the relevance of each statement to the participant. As with the MEIM, total scores are formed by averaging items for each scale; thus, total scores range from one to four. Higher scores reflect greater identification with American ideals. Phinney and her colleagues (1994) found this measure to have satisfactory reliability (Cronbach's $\alpha = .85$) for college students.

Results

Means and standard deviations for career resilience, the career influences, and ethnic influences are shown in Table 1 for the aggregate and each ethnic group. Correlations of resilience with each of the career influences and ethnic influences by ethnic group are presented in Table 2. Correlations of career resilience with the career influences are strong for all groups. However, those for ethnic identity differ considerably across groups.

Mean differences for the three ethnic groups. The first three questions address whether there are mean differences in scores for the three ethnic groups: African Americans, Anglo Americans, and Hispanics. Question one focuses on mean differences in career resilience, which

was examined using a univariate general linear model procedure. No differences were found between the mean scores for the three ethnic groups on career resilience ($F_{2,464} = 1.65$, $p = .19$).

Table 1.

Means and Standard Deviations for Career Resilience, the Career Influences, and the Ethnic Influences for each Ethnic Group

	Group							
	Aggregate		Anglo		Hispanic		African	
	N = 467		n = 357		n = 42		n = 68	
Variable	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Career Resilience	3.44	.34	3.44	.34	3.37	.37	3.49	.32
Career Influences								
Parent Influence	3.61	.47	3.62	.47	3.49	.54	3.65	.42
Teacher Influence	3.17	.53	3.18	.50	3.21	.62	3.14	.62
Friend Influence	3.05	.57	3.07	.58	2.91	.59	3.05	.50
Academic Self-Efficacy	3.19	.53	3.18	.52	3.20	.62	3.20	.52
HS Acad. Experiences	3.19	.56	3.18	.56	3.15	.58	3.26	.58
Career Commitment	3.49	.44	3.48	.45	3.51	.41	3.54	.42
Ethnic Influences								
Ethnic Identity	2.81	.54	2.61	.44	3.00	.45	3.32	.46
Orient. to Others	3.20	.45	3.21	.46	3.33	.38	3.11	.42
Ident. Am. Ideals	3.22	.47	3.31	.40	3.36	.47	2.90	.52

For question two, which focuses on the six career influence factors (influence of teachers, parents, and friends; academic self-efficacy; high school academic experiences; and career commitment), a multivariate general linear model (MANOVA) procedure was used. Again, no

differences were found between the mean scores for the three ethnic groups on any of the career influence factors (Pillai's Trace $F_{12,552} = 1.21$, $p = .27$).

Table 2.

Correlations for Career Resilience with the Career Influences and the Ethnic Influences for each Ethnic Group

Variable	Aggregate N = 467	Anglo n = 357	Hispanic n = 42	African n = 68
Career Influences				
Parent Influence	.55**	.59**	.36*	.46**
Teacher Influence	.58**	.59**	.66**	.55**
Friend Influence	.47**	.50**	.43**	.32**
Academic Self-Efficacy	.50**	.49**	.56**	.54**
HS Acad. Experiences	.37**	.36**	.51**	.28*
Career Commitment	.44**	.49**	.38	.30*
Ethnic Influences				
Ethnic Identity	.17**	.09	.25	.39**
Orient. to Others	.17**	.15*	.31	.28*
Ident. Am. Ideals	.25**	.37**	.32	.19

** p<.01, * p<.05

For question three, which focuses on the three ethnic influence factors (ethnic identity; orientation toward other cultural groups; and identification with American ideals), another MANOVA procedure was used. Significant differences were found between the mean scores for the three ethnic groups on the ethnic influence factors (Pillai's Trace $F_{6,554} = 26.20$, $p = .00$, $eta^2 = .22$). Inspection of the tests of between-subjects factors revealed that the significant result was

due to differences between groups in ethnic identity ($F_{2,278} = 68.73$, $p = .00$, $eta^2 = .33$) and identification with American ideals ($F_{2,278} = 22.85$, $p = .00$, $eta^2 = .14$).

Predictors of career resilience. Questions four and five address the extent to which career resilience is predicted by career and ethnic influences. To address question four, which focuses on the influence of teachers, parents, and friends; academic self-efficacy; high school academic experiences; career commitment; and ethnicity as predictors of career resilience, a multiple regression model was used. This model was significant ($F_{7,275} = 59.37$, $p = .00$, $R^2 = .60$), indicating that 60% of the variance in career resilience is explained by these career influence variables. Ethnicity was the only nonsignificant variable in the equation. A summary of regression indices for this model can be found in Table 3.

Table 3

Regression Indices for the Prediction of Career Resilience by Career Influences and Ethnicity

Variable	B	SE B	β	t	p
Parent Influence	.19	.03	.29	6.90	.000
Teacher Influence	.19	.03	.31	6.49	.000
Friend Influence	.10	.03	.17	3.87	.000
Academic Self-Efficacy	.18	.03	.29	5.18	.000
HS Acad. Experiences	-.09	.03	-.17	-3.02	.003
Career Commitment	.18	.03	.24	5.95	.000
Ethnicity	-.03	.02	-.04	-1.09	.279

To address question five, which focuses on the influence of ethnic identity, orientation toward other cultural groups, identification with American ideals, and ethnicity as predictors of career resilience, another multiple regression model was used. This model was significant ($F_{4,276}$ = 12.73, p = .00, R^2 = .16), indicating that 16% of the variance in career resilience is explained by these ethnic influence variables and ethnicity. All predictor variables in this equation were statistically significant predictors of career resilience. A summary of regression indices for this model can be found in Table 4.

Table 4.

Regression Indices for the Prediction of Career Resilience by Ethnic Influences and Ethnicity

Variable	B	SE B	β	t	p
Ethnic Identity	.09	.04	.15	2.53	.012
Orientation to Others	.12	.04	.16	2.82	.005
Ident. with American Ideals	.22	.04	.31	5.29	.000
Ethnicity	-.11	.04	-.18	-2.78	.006

In order to understand better the ethnic influence variables that predict career resilience for each group, separate regression equations with ethnic identity, orientation toward other cultural groups, and identification with American ideals as predictors of career resilience were computed for each ethnic group. For African Americans, a significant regression model ($F_{3,63}$ = 6.19, p = .001, R^2 = .23) revealed that ethnic identity (B = .26, SE B = .08, β = .38, t = 3.27, p = .002) is the only significant predictor of career resilience, explaining 23% of the variance. For Anglo Americans, a significant regression model ($F_{3,188}$ = 11.94, p = .000, R^2 = .16) revealed

that identification with American ideals (B = .30, SE B = .06, β = .36, t = 5.31, p = .000) and orientation to other groups (B = .11, SE B = .05, β = .15, t = 2.25, p = .026) are significant predictors of career resilience, explaining 16% of the variance. For Hispanic students, the regression model was not significant. However, the R^2 was .23, suggesting that the model was not significant because of the small sample size.

Discussion

There are several preliminary key implications of our findings. First, career resilience and the career influences, as constructs, seem to function in similar ways for all ethnic groups. Second, all of the career influence factors examined have strong relationships with career resilience. These results indicate that, in order to have a strong foundation for career resilience, students need to have positive support from significant others for their career goals and positive experiences during their high school years, as well as internal resources inclusive of commitment to career goals and academic self-efficacy. These influences are interrelated and may be reciprocal.

The third implication relates to the relationship between career resilience and ethnic influences. Not only are there mean differences among ethnic groups for ethnic influences, but ethnic identity and identification with American ideals function differently for different ethnic groups in predicting career resilience. For African Americans, a high level of career resilience is associated with having a strong sense of one's cultural roots and ethnic pride. This finding is congruent with previous research. McCubbin et al. (1998) have recently observed relationships between one's ethnic identity and appraisal of stress, with those who have a high level of ethnic identity feeling more confident in their ability to resolve stressful events. Interventions that focus on the development of a strong ethnic identity are likely to facilitate students' ability to

overcome obstacles and remain on their career path. On the other hand, for Anglo Americans, orientation to other groups (i.e., openness to and interactions with other cultural groups) and a strong identification with the ideals of the majority culture are associated with a high level of career resilience.

Future directions that we will be focusing on include better comprehension of the construct of career resilience, as well as its predictors for diverse cultural groups. We will focus as well on differences in resilience for those who perceive low versus high effects of stressful events and the specific types of resources/protective factors needed by those with high versus low stress levels. We also will investigate whether or not patterns are consistent across ethnic groups and with non-college populations.

Future directions are needed as well to focus on the role of interventions to enhance career resilience. In particular, effective interventions that can enhance career resilience across ethnic groups should be identified. Career resilience also needs to be expanded upon to determine which predictors operate at the various stages of career resilience, such as goal planning, or within the work settings itself.

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